Betamethasone eye drops and eye ointment (Betnesol, Vistamethasone)

Betamethasone eye drops and ointment are usually prescribed by an eye specialist. Unless you've been told otherwise, use the drops regularly every 1-2 hours until your symptoms are controlled, and then several times a day for a few days. Eye drops can cause blurred vision when first put in. Do not drive and do not use tools or machines until your vision is clear again.

About betamethasone eye drops and eye ointment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of medicine</th>
<th>Corticosteroid eye preparation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Used for</td>
<td>To treat eye inflammation in adults or children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Also called</td>
<td>Betamethasone sodium phosphate</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Brands include: Betnesol®, Vistamethasone®</td>
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<td></td>
<td>There is also a combination brand called Betnesol-N® which contains betamethasone with an anti-infective called neomycin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Available as</td>
<td>Eye drops and eye ointment</td>
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Betamethasone eye drops and ointment are used to treat short-term inflammatory eye conditions. They are usually prescribed by an eye specialist. They contain a corticosteroid (sometimes called a 'steroid') which helps relieve inflammation, redness and irritation.

Some betamethasone eye drops also contain an anti-infective medicine called neomycin. These drops are sometimes used to prevent infections from developing following eye injury or surgery.

Before using betamethasone eye drops/ointment

To make sure this is the right treatment for you, before you start using betamethasone it is important that your doctor knows:

- If you have ever had an allergic reaction to any eye drops or other medicines.
- If you think you may have an eye infection.
- If you wear soft contact lenses.
- If you are pregnant or breast-feeding.
- If you are taking any other medicines. This includes any medicines you are taking which are available to buy without a prescription, as well as herbal and complementary medicines.

How to use betamethasone eye drops

1. Wash your hands well before you use the drops.
2. Remove the cap.
3. Tilt your head back a little and pull the lower lid of your eye downwards to form a pocket.
4. Hold the bottle upside down near to your eye. Try not to touch your eye as you do this.
5. Apply enough pressure to the bottle to gently release one drop into your eye. Only use a second drop if the first drop missed going into your eye.
6. Close your eye for a minute or two, and press gently on the side of your nose where the corner of your eye meets your nose. This helps to stop the drop from draining away and keeps it in your eye.
7. Repeat the process in your other eye if you have been told to use the drops in both eyes.
8. Replace the cap.

How to use betamethasone eye ointment

1. First wash your hands.
2. Remove the cap from the tube.
3. Pull the lower lid of your eye downwards to form a pocket.
4. Hold the tube upside down near to your eye.
5. Squeeze the tube gently to release a thin line of ointment along the inside of your lower eye lid. Try not to touch your eye with the end of the tube as you do this.
6. Blink a few times to spread the ointment around the inside of your eye.
7. Repeat the process in your other eye if you have been told to use it in both eyes.
8. Replace the cap on the tube.

Getting the most from your treatment

- Before you use the eye drops/ointment, read the manufacturer's printed information leaflet from the pack. It will give you more information about betamethasone and will provide you with a full list of the side-effects which you could experience.
- Use the eye drops and/or ointment exactly as your doctor tells you to. Unless you have been told otherwise, use the drops every 1-2 hours (while you are awake) on the first two days until your symptoms are controlled, and then several times a day for the next few days. If you have been prescribed eye ointment to use as well as drops, you should use the ointment at night only. If you have been prescribed eye ointment only (without any drops) then you should apply it 2-4 times a day.
- Betamethasone eye drops and ointment are only meant to be used for a short period of time. Do not use them for longer than one week unless your doctor advises you otherwise. This is because they can cause problems within your eye when used for longer than recommended.
- Take care not to touch the tip of the dropper or tube with your eye, fingers, or any other surface. This will help to prevent the risk of infection.
- When first put in, eye preparations can cause blurred vision. This should clear within a few minutes, but make sure that you can see properly before you drive or before using tools or machines, as otherwise you may put yourself and others at risk.
- If you are using any other eye drops or ointments, leave 5-10 minutes between applying each one. This is to prevent more liquid going into your eye than it can handle. Otherwise the drops will overflow from your eye and may not have the intended effect.
- If your symptoms do not improve within a few days, or if they become worse, check with your doctor.
- If you normally wear contact lenses, please wear your spectacles instead until your doctor advises you that it is suitable for you to wear your lenses again. There are two reasons for this - you should not wear lenses while your eyes are inflamed, and bottles of eye drops contain a preservative which can affect some soft contact lenses.

Can betamethasone eye preparations cause problems?

Along with their useful effects, eye preparations can cause unwanted side-effects although not everyone experiences them. The table below contains the most common ones associated with betamethasone eye drops and ointment. You will find a full list in the manufacturer's information leaflet supplied in the pack. Unwanted effects often improve as your body adjusts to a new medicine but speak with your doctor or pharmacist if any of the following continue or become troublesome.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Betamethasone eye drop/ointment side-effects</th>
<th>What can I do if I experience this?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mild discomfort or irritation</td>
<td>This should quickly pass. If the discomfort continues, speak with your doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blurred vision</td>
<td>This usually disappears within a few minutes. Do not drive and do not use tools or machines while affected</td>
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Occasionally people can be allergic to eye drops because of the preservative they contain. If you notice a rash around your eyes, or any swelling or itching, stop using the drops and contact a doctor for advice. If you experience any other symptoms, speak with your doctor or pharmacist for further advice.

How to store betamethasone eye drops and ointment

- Keep all medicines out of the reach and sight of children.
- Store in a cool, dry place, away from direct heat and light.
- Eye preparations only keep for four weeks once the bottle/tube has been opened, so throw away the container after your course of treatment is finished even if there is some preparation left over. Do not keep opened bottles or tubes to use another time.

Important information about all medicines
If you suspect that someone has swallowed some of this medicine, go to the accident and emergency department of your local hospital. Take the container with you, even if it is empty.

This medicine is for you. Never give it to other people even if their condition appears to be the same as yours.

If you are having an operation or dental treatment, tell the person carrying out the treatment which medicines you are using.

Do not keep out-of-date or unwanted medicines. Take them to your local pharmacy which will dispose of them for you.

If you buy any medicines, check with a pharmacist that they are safe to use with your other medicines.

If you have any questions about this medicine ask your pharmacist.

Further reading & references


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